

AWARDS

2008

Welcome to Hi-Fi World's 2008 Awards special, where you'll find our favourite products reviewed over the past twelve months. Competition has been exceptionally tough this year, so we're delighted to bring you what in our opinion are the year's best offerings in specialist separates hi-fi...



AWARDS 2008: THE WINNERS

| | |
|-------------------------|----------------------------|
| LOUDSPEAKERS: | Q ACOUSTICS 1050I |
| TURNTABLE: | AVID VOLVERE SEQUEL |
| PHONO STAGE: | EMILLE LABS KPE-2AS |
| DIGITAL: | CHORD QBD76 |
| INTEGRATED: | LEEMA PULSE |
| POWER AMPLIFIER: | QUAD II EIGHTY |
| SYSTEM: | ARCAM SOLO MINI |
| COMPUTER AUDIO: | LINN SNEAKY DS |



TURNTABLE

WINNER: AVID VOLVERE SEQUEL £4,600

This year has seen a good number of excellent turntables tested in the pages of *Hi-Fi World*, so much so that this category proved the most hotly contended of them all. However, one particular machine stuck out in our collective minds for its superb all round ability allied to its unassuming looks and small footprint. Whereas £5,000 will buy you vast sculptural monoliths in Perspex, gold or chromium if you so wish, Avid's Volvere Sequel is an altogether more unassuming proposition – but no less effective. Indeed, it is more. We've often asked ourselves, 'if you were going to do a turntable from first principles, how would you do it?' Well the Avid is pretty much best practice made visible; there's very little conceptually wrong with it, which sets it apart from so many other rivals, some of which are more accomplished in particular respects

yet less able all rounders. Here we have a belt drive with a very powerful, muscular motor, a short belt running close to the inner platter and a suspension designed with almost no lateral movement possible. This gets around most of the bugbears of belt drive at a stroke – and it shows in the listening, as the Avid is exceptionally speed-stable and unflustered even when the musical going get tough. It also features a superbly designed platter and record support which sinks all the vibrations from the record surface down to earth, creating a highly stable platform that lets the tonearm do its job.

The result is a turntable that doesn't sound like a turntable; it is highly neutral, neither euphonic like many rival high end decks nor dysphonic like expensive digital devices, and simply draws your attention to what is in the groove. Interestingly, many analogue addicts

actually admit the Avid is brilliant but don't like the sound, describing it as too stark, too dynamic, too clear. But to criticise it for these reasons is to object to its proximity to live music, which possesses the same characteristics. It certainly isn't a machine to provide background music – being a seat-of-the-pants listening experience – but if you're satisfied that this is what you want then there's nothing at the price to touch it.

We'd counsel partnering with a Naim ARO tonearm and a Koetsu or van den Hul cartridge, whereupon it mellows out and sweetens up, giving just the right balance between detail and beguiling musicality. Beautifully made, functionally superb but not terribly sexy to look at, the Avid Volvere Sequel does exactly what a high end turntable should do – which is bring you closer to your record collection.

RUNNER UP: ROKSAN XERXES.20 PLUS £2,200

Superb affordable high end turntable with tremendous pace, grip and focus – the legend goes from strength to strength.

